

My Visit to North and South Vietnam

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Last winter I made a tour for about a month leaving Tokyo on January 4, 1965, in the Indochina peninsula, the countries now occupying the attention of the whole world. I made this trip in my private capacity, though officially I was a guest of the North Vietnam Socialist Party. It was my desire to see the actual situation in those countries with unbiased eyes. I don't know whether I had achieved my desire or not, but I should like to state frankly what I had seen and felt in the tour.

First of all, I would like to explain the ways through which the tourists enter into North Vietnam. The one is air or land way from China, the other is airways from Phnom Penh to Hanoi. The Royal Cambodian Airlines operates regular service between the two cities. In my trip I first arrived at Saigon, South Vietnam, and after visiting Dalat, Danim and Hue for 9 days, I flew to Phnom Penh. Before I left Tokyo, I had tried to get in touch with the North Vietnam Socialist Party sending several letters to them. But I had not received any definite answer from them. So when I left Tokyo, I had no invitation or entrance visa of North Vietnam. I sent a cable from Tokyo to Mr. Guen Shen, chairman of the North Vietnam Socialist Party, informing that I would arrive at Hanoi on January 12 th.

Upon arriving at Phnom Penh, I visited North Vietnam Trade Representatives there with the hope that there might be the formal invitation for me. But I found nothing. I made up my mind to fly to Hanoi and I took the Royal Cambodian Airway plane to Hanoi. As I had no papers authorizing my entrance into North Vietnam, I was very much uneasy, fearing that if the Hanoi authority did not permit my entrance I would have to return to Phnom Penh on the same plane. But my anxiety was cleared when the plane landed at Hanoi airport, where I found many leaders of the Socialist Party waiting to welcome me.

I stayed in north Vietnam for 9 days and during which I had visited various places including Hanoi, Haiphong, Halon Bay and Honguey coal mines. I had

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interviews with many people such as President Ho-Chiminh and the representatives of the National Front, Intellectuals' Association and General Council of Labor Union.

After finishing North Vietnam, I visited Cambodia for 7 days and also Laos. In Laos, I visited General Nosavang at his private residence, who is reported now a political refugee in Thailand failing to carry out his recent coup d'état successfully. At the end of my tour, I visited Bangkok and exchanged views with the officials of Japanese Embassy there. These are the outline of my travel itinerary in Indochina.

NEUTRALITY OF NORTH VIETNAM

The war in Vietnam is developing worse and worse as we have feared with the bombing on North Vietnam by U. S. Air Force and direct participation of the United States troops in the land war between the Saigon Government and the so-called South Vietnam Liberation Front. Previously I had anticipated that, of course the increased possibility of Chinese intervention in the conflict would be a grave matter, the development of situation which compel the Ho-Chiminh Government to abandon its neutrality policy hitherto it has been taking would be more dangerous. Unfortunately, my anxiety seems to be realized.

I think it is undeniable that there have been some cases of guerrilla infiltrations into south from north, as the United States stated, but it seems that Hanoi Government has been careful not to give substantial support to the guerrillas in south openly. It has been their desire that the spirit of Geneva Convention be respected by themselves and by others. But, with the situation developed so far, it is feared that they have to abandon the attitude they have been hitherto taking. When I was in Hanoi, I asked a question to President Ho-Chiminh and other leaders that, "Do you think which is shorter the distance from Hanoi to Moscow or to Peking?" and they answered that, "The distance is equal, we see Peking and Moscow in a same distance." However, at present, I am afraid North Vietnam has been driven closer to Peking as the result of America's intensified bombing on north.

From the historical point of view, Vietnam has been always a victim of Chinese aggression since the day of the Yuan dynasty, some 800 years ago, and they both South and North, have indelible sense of fear and caution against Chinese. Even today, they do not want to see the Chinese intervene in their affairs. It was my impression given in my recent visit to Vietnam that leaders of the so-called South Vietnam Liberation Front were nationalists rather than

communities. Their aim is to make South Vietnam free and independent nation.

But, now the situation is changing rapidly, and the Hanoi Government is going to take the road which the United States had previously deemed the most dangerous and undesirable.

PRESIDENT HO-CHIMINH'S VIEW ON NEUTRALITY OF INDO-CHINA

On April 5 1965, the *Yomiuri Shinbun*, one of the leading newspapers in Japan, carried a report from Saigon sent by its correspondent. I should like to quote of the report.

The political aim of the Liberation Front is to establish a democratic national government in South. Communistic regime is not their choice. They do not wish to realize unity of North and South at present. They are calling together those of anti-U. S. and anti-Government elements and developing armed political struggle with the aim of establishing a democratic national government at Saigon. Of course, they would not necessarily refuse assistance given by North Vietnam. But, as the result of America's policy to enlarge the war executed since February last, they are compelled to abandon their original policy. It might be said that that the United States has brought about the situation in which the struggle for liberation of South Vietnam is not a matter of South Vietnam nationalist only. At the time when bombing on North by the United States began, it was reported that the nationalist leaders of the Liberation Front feared that they would be compelled to tie up with North Vietnam Labor Party or be placed under the influence of it. Since the middle of March, America's North bombing has been carried out daily. Ambassador Taylor declared that there would be no limit to escalation, and America's scorched earth tactics by jet fighters were carried out on full scale. Under these circumstances, the North and South common front was organized on about March 20th, it was so reported.

In short, the *Yomiuri* correspondent says that the National Liberation Front and Hanoi regime, which have hitherto been separate and independent organizations, are now going to be a united one. Since the early stage of the Vietnam affairs, I have feared the situation like this might be developed.

When I met President Ho-Chiminh at Hanoi, I asked him what was his opinion about the neutralization of Indochina proposed by Prince Sihanouk. He was 75 years old, but looked very young for his age, bearded and wearing cotton clothes and sandals made of used car tire. He looked just as we have seen him

in pictures. He speaks, beside Vietnamese, English, Chinese and French quite well. To my question, he replied, "there are many ways to neutralize Indochina. Prince Sihanouk's is one and President De Gaulle's the other. In principle, I agree with the neutralization of Indochina. I think the neutralizations of this district should be made including North Vietnam and Thailand. However, the negotiation for neutralization should be started after the United States withdrew its forces from not only South Vietnam but whole of Indochina." And he said in Vietnamese with chuckles, "it is not enough only Taylo (arms in Vietnamese) goes nome. Chanilo (legs) must go together with them. We would appreciate it if they were good enough to leave some of their weapons and ammunitions for parting present."

If the withdrawal of U. S. Forces is prerequisite as President Ho-Chiminh says, the United States would not accept it. Objective analysis of the present situation tells us that there is no possibility the United States would ever accept such a proposal. America's policy is that it beat up North Vietnam with strong power and force them to propose peace negotiation without condition. America's withdrawal at this stage will never be expected.

The United States has been pouring 2 million dollars daily into South Vietnam for more than three consecutive years. This is officially announced sum and I think it would be more in reality. Was this enormous sum of money spent for the welfare of South Vietnam people in general or for keeping the war from going too far? More than a few Generals of South Vietnam are eager to put as much part of this money as possible into their pockets without attracting attention of Vietnamese as well as Americans.

At Saigon, I met an assistant chief editor of a leading Vietnamese paper, whose name I will withhold for his safety. He was one of a typical Vietnamese intellectuals. He told me, "U. S. must give its economic and military assistances for 10 years ahead, if we should defeat the Viet Cong. In 10 years, it will be possible that the Viet Cong be knocked down. The Soviet or China might give assistances of military nature to Vietnam but never economic ones. But, as for me, I sincerely wish we would stop killing each other."

Since the Vietnamese fought against the French colonialists, there have never been peace in Vietnam for 25 years. Still now, they are suffering from non-declared war, a desperate and gloomy war. The comment made by this assistant editor must be the true feeling of all the Vietnamese people. He told me also in lowered voice that, "in fact, South Vietnamese pay deep respect to President Ho-Chiminh." When one forecast the fate of the present Vietnam war, I think,

one must take into consideration the fact that there are a lot of peoples who have such feeling in South Vietnam.

STUDENTS, BUDDHISTS AND THE LIBERATION FRONT

When I visited Hue, I happened to see a general strike led by the students. The town had stopped all its activities. The streets which usually busy with people was completely deserted. I was astonished how the student could lead the workers in such a total strike.

As I wanted to know the tactics and aims of the strike, I visited the headquarters of the Students' Campaign and met the Secretary and leaders of students. I was told that their aim was to establish democracy and fair and just social system. There were many slogans painted on the walls of the houses, some in English-perhaps for American's convenience-those are saying "Leave Vietnamese affairs to Vietnamese," "No more Imperialism in Vietnam." There was no word for Anti-American Imperialism. Their target was the Government of South Vietnam. Their young minds were dissatisfied with the weak Government, acting as a tool of Generals and certain foreign countries behind them. The students wanted to establish anew and powerful Government for themselves, free and independent. I made more searching questions to them and found that they had considerable caution against communism. Is there any connection between them and the South Vietnam National Liberation Front? They denied when questioned about it. In North, when I posed a question to the leaders of the North Vietnam National Front-that is a united front of Labor Party, Democratic Party, Socialist Party and various religious bodies-about the possible direct connection between them and South Vietnam buddhists and student organizations. They also denied it. But I can not dispell my doubt that there might be a secret understanding between them.

Leaders of buddhist activities in South also denied it and told me that "We will never go with the communistic North Vietnam buddhists." In my opinion, we should pay keen attention to the buddhist activities in politics as they occupies 80 per cent of the whole population. They exercise very big influence upon the people. We can never neglect their power. At the Buddhist Center in Saigon, I saw a crowd of followers-men, women, old and young-watching anxiously at their leader priest who was performing fast for political reason. Their looks were impressive. Their expression demonstrated great sorrow at the priest and deep indignation toward something which compelled the priest to do so. There are many buddhists in Vietnam, not only in South, but in North and in so-called

liberated area. I wonder, can't we find any means to start a peace negotiation through the buddhist organizations?

AN AMERICAN ARMY OFFICER'S LAMENTATION

Hue is the city in South Vietnam where the first incident of buddhist priest's suicide by burning himself as well as the students' political demonstration had occurred. One evening, I went to a Vietnamese restaurant to take a dinner. Everywhere were crowded. It seemed it was an auspicious day for the local people. After visiting several eating places to find a seat in vain, I had at last got one in a Chinese restaurant outside the busy streets. I was shown to a table at which a young American was sitting alone. He introduced himself to me that he was an Army Lieutenant and a member of the American Military Assistance Group to Vietnamese Government. We had a conversation while eating. Our topics were naturally things concerning the war. He told me about his experiences in Vietnam. "I have been in the Army for some years and took part in combats at various places. But I have never experienced such a queer and vague war as that in Vietnam. We have no idea where the enemy is and from what direction they attack on us. They come like a wind and go with the wind. The other day, one of my friends, an Army Captain was shot in the belly. We rescued him under the enemy sniper's bullets by a helicopter. He died in a hospital. More recently, we had patrols by jeeps on the same road twice without any sign of danger. On the third patrol, which was just after the second one, a land-mine had bursted and all the soldiers on the jeep were killed. Such cases are not rare. At the barracks, when reports come that V. C. (Viet Cong) is nearing, we call the Vietnamese Commander and officers. But they are sleeping like a log. When the commander wake up and call out his troops, the V. C. had gone. Even when we success to encircle V. C. unit completely and thoroughly, we find in the last stage there was a tear in the net and all the V. C. were gone through it. We can't fight a war in such a condition." He shrugged his shoulders and said, "I will become a Captain soon, then I will quit the Army and come home." I haven't seen him since, and I don't know whether this nice young officer come home safely as he hoped or was killed by the V. C.

FEAR OF DEVELOPMENT TOWARD CATASTROPHE

It is officially announced that the number of the members of the U. S. Military Assistance Group in Vietnam is 23,000, but it is said the real force would be more than 50,000. Some time ago, about 3,500 Marines landed at Danang

and more recently the U. S. Army was reinforced by considerable number. By now, it is estimated that more than 150,000 troops are stationed in Vietnam. On the other hand, the Vietnamese Government is recruiting soldiers by seizing forcible young men loitering around the entertainment quarters in Saigon. Recently, it is reported that the Government has promulgated the Draft Law recruiting men between the ages of 20 to 30. But I wonder, can the South Vietnam carry out the war against the most stubborn soldiers in the world (the Liberation Front guerrillas) with such a low morale untrained jumble forces. It is clearly seen that the war-weariness prevailed among the whole people.

There is one more disadvantageous fact for the South. That is the political instability. The young generals, who have driven out General Guen Khan from his post, are now making struggle for power among them. A Japanese who lives in Bangkok lamented to me, "Is there no one public-spirited leader in South Vietnam?" To which I felt the same way.

I believe, it is waste of blood and money the United States pour 2 million dollars a day and more than 150,000 soldiers into South Vietnam to support such a miserable Government. I don't think America can bring about favorable opportunity to start a peace negotiation by continuing bombing on North. On the contrary, it will develop the war into unexpected catastrophe. Even if the catastrophe is avoided, it will drive the North to [Communist China for help. In that situation, Hanoi Government will tie up openly with the Liberation Front to fight against South and the United States, and the Communist Korea, China as the Soviet will send their volunteers to help the guerrillas.

The Republic of Korea has sent its non-combat units to South Vietnam and it is reported that the dispatch of a large combat troops will follow. If they happen to fight against North Korean volunteers in the jungle, who can guarantee the fire will never leap to 38 parallel. Thus, a very grave situation will be created.

BOMBING ON NORTH AND NEUTRALITY

It is my impression given at Hanoi that North will never be defeated, even if Hanoi has been reduced to ashes and its suburban industrial areas destroyed completely by air raid. The people of North are proud of their history of resistance against foreign aggression and the victory over France at Dien Bien Phu.

President Ho Chiminh has refused the proposal of help from Peking and Moscow. We can see the fact that the assistance from them has been given directly to the Liberation Front, not through North. It is thought that Ho

Chiminh regime is afraid of the coming across the border of Chinese Forces and making North territory the field of battle.

It is reported that, at the Indochina Peoples Conference held February last, Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia and South Vietnam refugee leaders (now in Paris) made efforts to make Indochinese countries neutral ones. But during the meeting, America's bombing on North has been intensified and the result of the conference turned out to be contrary to the desire of Prince Sihanouk and he could not check the general trend which urged to fight against America.

DON'T DISTURB INDOCHINA ANY MORE

Cambodia is a small country, and Prince Sihanouk is a young statesman. But his opinion to neutralize Indochina has been attracting attention of Indochina people including South and North Vietnam. Increasingly powerful support are given to it. On this occasion, I believe, we the non-Indochina nations should extend possible cooperation to them in their effort to realize their wish. Power does not settle the affairs of Indochina. If the United States continues its power-policy in Indochina, it will not promote American interest nor its prestige.

I believe, we Japanese should try to talk with our friend in the United States frankly in order to bring the present war in Vietnam to an end. U Thant, Secretary General of the United Nations and Mr. Pearson of Canada are making efforts for the purpose. Mr. Wilson, Prime Minister of United Kingdom, is also doing his best to persuade the Nations concerned, though he admitted America's bombing on North as inevitable. On this occasion, Japan, as an Asian nation, should exercise its independent diplomatic policy in Asian affairs, and endeavour to create a situation in which the North and South Vietnam become a federated and neutral nation.

What an attitude will Peking take in the future? Does she push her course of international communism forward and try to convert all the countries in Indochina into communism? Practical measures to be taken by us in future would be some what changed according to the future attitude of Peking.

At present, Indochina is a kind of international dumping ground of the East and West. To clear the ground, we must urge Vietnam peoples to stand up against the evil. As for us outsiders, we should not take the part of those who pollute Indochina more. Economic assistance without strings will be welcome by Indochina nations including North Vietnam, and I should like to say that the United States should have far-sighted view and make efforts to encourage them to create favorable situation in that area of the world.